

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 and 9-12 are pending. By this Amendment, the Abstract is replaced with an amended Abstract, claim 8 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, and claims 1-7, 9, 10, and 12 have been amended. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration based on the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is thanked for the many courtesies extended to Applicants' attorney in the course of a personal interview conducted March 30, 2004. The substance of the interview is included herein per MPEP §713.04.

I. Withdrawal of the Election Requirement is Requested

The Office Action asserts that the application contains claims directed to two different patentably distinct species (Species A, shown in Figs. 1-4 and Species B, shown in Figs. 5-8). Applicants maintain their traversal of the Election of Species Requirement. Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claim 12 is a generic claim.

As agreed upon during the March 30 personal interview, because amended claim 12 is a generic claim and amended claims 1-7 and 9-11 depend directly or indirectly from generic claim 12, the Examiner has agreed to withdraw the Election of Species Requirement.

II. The Specification and Abstract Satisfy All Formal Requirements

The Abstract of the disclosure was objected to for improper language and format. The Abstract is replaced with an amended Abstract to obviate the rejection. Withdrawal of the objection to the Abstract is respectfully requested.

II!. The Claims Satisfy All Formal Requirements

The Office Action objects to claim 8 due to an informality. Claim 8 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Withdrawal of the objection to claim 8 is respectfully requested.

IV. The Claims Define Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 7 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,462,361 to Sato et al. ("Sato").

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Office Action indicates that claims 8-11 include allowable subject matter. As agreed upon during the March 30 personal interview, because independent 12 has been amended to include allowable features from claim 8, and claim 7 has been amended to depend from claim 12, the rejection of claims 7 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) is obviated. Accordingly withdrawal of the rejection of claims 7 and 12 is respectfully requested.

Further, because claims 9 and 10 have been amended to depend from claim 7 and claim 11 depends from claim 10, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection to dependent claims 9-11.

Further, Applicants have amended claim 1 to depend from independent generic claim 12. Because claim 1 depends from generic claim 12, claims 2 and 6 depend from claim 1, claims 3 and 4 depend from claim 2, and claim 5 depends from claim 4, allowance of claims 1-6 is respectfully requested.

V. Conclusion

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-7 and 9-12 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiners invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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